

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5638

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to student assessments.

Brief Description: Changing student assessment provisions.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Poulsen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/30/05 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to pilot two or more alternative assessments during the 2005-06 school year and to develop an appeals process no later than the 2007-08 school year.
- Removes the requirement for legislative approval of alternative assessments and any appeals process.
- Removes the requirement that students take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) twice before using an alternative assessment and removes from student transcripts a student's score on the high school WASL.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Haigh, Hunter, McDermott and Santos.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Shabro and Tom.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Under current law, beginning with the graduating class of 2008, students must acquire a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) in order to earn a high school diploma, though it

is not the only requirement for a high school diploma. The CAA is evidence that a student has met state academic standards in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Beginning in 2010, science will be added as a required content area.

A student may also demonstrate achievement of state academic standards on one or more objective alternative assessments once these alternative assessments are approved by the Legislature. The alternatives may include an appeals process. A student must retake the high school WASL at least once to use the objective alternative assessment in order to earn a CAA. If a student demonstrates achievement of state academic standards using an objective alternative assessment, the student will earn a CAA. The student's high school transcript will note whether the student earned the certificate via the high school WASL or via an objective alternative assessment.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must pilot two or more alternative assessments in the 2005-06 school year, with the goal of implementing at least one in the 2006-07 school year. The OSPI must consult with a list of stakeholders in the piloting, development and implementation of the alternatives. The rigor of the content areas assessed on the alternative assessments must be equivalent rather than comparable to the knowledge and skills assessed on the WASL, and the alternatives must be valid and reliable. Once alternative assessments have been deemed adequate by the OSPI, school districts must offer them to students.

The requirement for legislative approval of the alternatives is removed and replaced with language that directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide the education committees of the Legislature with an opportunity to review alternative assessment options for students prior to their implementation. The OSPI must provide this review opportunity by January 15 of the school year before the school year planned for implementation.

The OSPI must put an appeals process in place for use by students no later than the 2007-08 school year. The criteria for appeals must have the ability to be consistently applied throughout the state. The requirement that the Legislature approve the appeals process is removed. The appeals process is added to the list of components of the high school assessment system.

New language is added to clarify the permission that students have in current law to combine content area results from the WASL with results from alternative assessments to demonstrate achievement of state academic standards. The results may be combined as long as the student achieves at the proficient level or above in each content area.

Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, each public school must notify students and parents, in the primary language of the parents to the extent practicable, of the options under the high school assessment system for students to demonstrate achievement of state standards.

Students and parents must also be notified, in the primary language of the parents to the extent practicable, of the different courses and programs in career and technical education, including those offered at skills centers that provide students with the knowledge and skills in the content areas assessed on the high school assessment system and included in the CAA.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008 rather than 2006, student transcripts will note whether the student achieved the CAA or the Certificate of Individual Achievement. It will also note, but not with a scholar's designation, each content area in which a student achieved at the highest level on the assessment. It will not include the student's WASL scores, and will not indicate whether a student achieved the CAA using the WASL or an alternative assessment. In addition, students will be required to take the WASL once but not twice before they may use an alternative assessment.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

The alternative assessments must be valid and reliable. The date that assessment results will be included on a student's transcript is delayed for two years. A student's score on the WASL will not be included on a student's transcript and the way the student earns a CAA will not be differentiated. References to a scholar's designation are removed, and a student is permitted to use an alternative assessment after taking the WASL once rather than twice.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support of second substitute) This legislation was created with a broad group of stakeholders. It establishes a critically important set of timelines for the development, piloting, and implementation of alternatives to the WASL. These alternative assessments are an integral part of the assessment system and are necessary to ensure that students have multiple ways to meet the state's standards. The legislation ensures the availability of an appeals process. The removal of legislative approval will help speed up the process of implementation. The Legislature is not the school board in the sky, so it should not be in the position of approving the alternatives. The legislation ensures that parents will be notified of their children's options under the assessment system, a refinement that will strengthen the entire system. The clarification that the alternatives will be equivalent in rigor to the WASL will help ensure their credibility. The requirement that students and parents be notified of career and technical program options that are aligned to state standards will ensure that students learn about the educational options available to them in these programs.

(With concerns on second substitute) The original bill removed a student's WASL scores from the transcript, a feature that should be, but is no longer included in the legislation. It also allowed a student to use an alternative before failing the WASL twice, another important

refinement of the assessment system. The legislation needs to clarify what the appeals process will include and the types of safeguards that will be in place to ensure that students have every opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The communication requirement in a parent's primary language might best be accomplished through a model provided by the OSPI.

Testimony Against: (Second substitute) The alternatives in this legislation are part of a high stakes assessment system that is unfair to students. The WASL was intended to be a system's check, not a test used for individual student accountability. Before students are denied a diploma, additional safeguards need to be in place, including student diagnostic information for teachers, time for educator and staff collaboration, remediation opportunities, including extended learning for students, and a reduction of workload demands on teachers.

Persons Testifying: (In support of second substitute) Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Greg Hall, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Susan Mielke, Washington Roundtable; Kathleen Lopp and Marianna Goheen, Washington Association For Career and Technical Education; Gil Mendoza, Tacoma Public Schools; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Suzanne Wright, Tulalip Tribes; Larry Pierce, Washington State Native American Higher Education Consortium; Rainer Houser, Association of Washington State Principals; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

(With concerns on second substitute) Mary Kenfield, State Parent Teacher Association.

(Opposed to second substitute) Gary King, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.